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The President's Daily Brief

18 April 1973

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~~*Top Secret*~~ 25X1

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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April 18, 1973

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LATE ITEM

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

18 April 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Soviets are making considerable progress in helping Iraq develop facilities at the port of Umm Qasr. *(Page 1)*

The new India-Bangladesh proposal on POW repatriation is an important gesture, but Pakistan will find some provisions hard to accept. *(Page 3)*

President Qadhafi's speeches this week calling for a "new revolution" appear to be primarily aimed at combating domestic opposition to the proposed union with Egypt. *(Page 4)*

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So far this year, the Soviets are reported to have contracted to buy nearly eight million tons of grain, mostly from the US and Canada. *(Page 6)*

Yesterday's Security Council meeting on the Lebanese complaint made no progress, and chances for agreement on a balanced resolution are slim. *(Page 6)*

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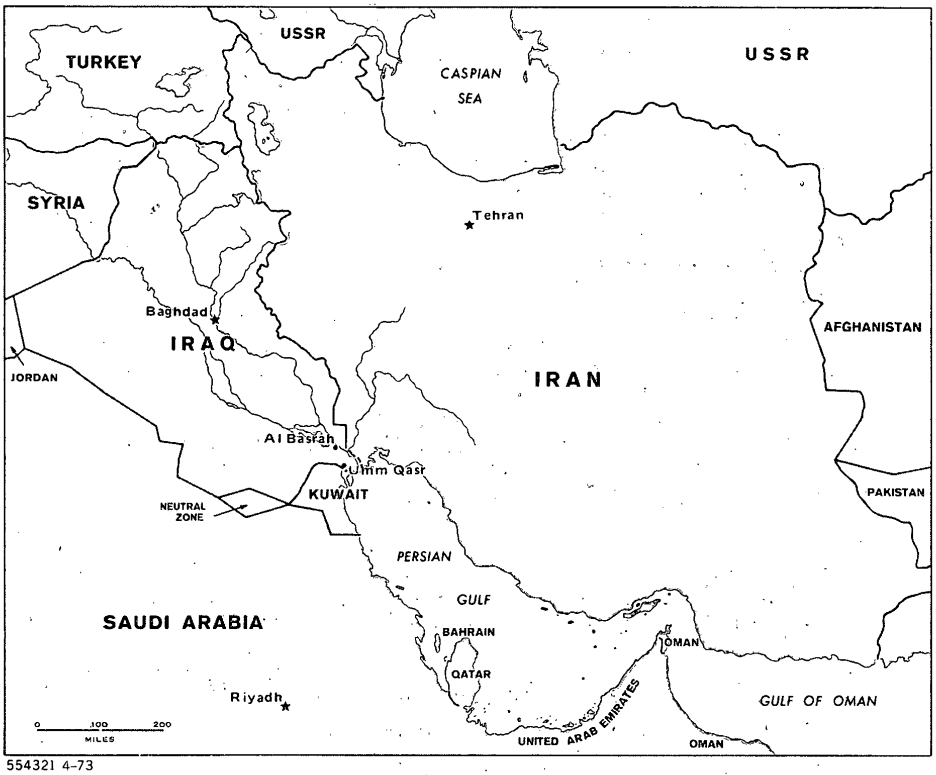

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USSR-IRAQ

The Soviets are making considerable progress in helping Iraq develop facilities at Umm Qasr, the port near the site of Iraq's recent incursion into territory disputed with Kuwait. At this time, the facility includes:

--Concrete docks with electric cranes, a floating crane, and tugs;

--Oil storage and warehousing; major expansion is under way.

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--A railroad and highway linking Umm Qasr with Al Basrah, Iraq's main port and naval base.

Although the Soviets have been involved in the development of Umm Qasr since 1959, the current expansion has been under way since 1971.

The Soviets can use Umm Qasr, like the larger scale facilities in Syria and Egypt, as a point of transshipment, crew exchange, and ship repair. The port's usefulness is limited, however, by the control that other, less friendly, states could exercise over entry to the Gulf.

Umm Qasr presumably attracts Moscow for broader politico-strategic reasons. The presence of Admiral Gorshkov, commander in chief of the Soviet Navy, together with a Soviet cruiser, in Umm Qasr last week on the first anniversary of the Soviet-Iraqi friendship treaty underlined Moscow's interest. With such displays, Moscow hopes to influence:

--the US, reminding Washington that Umm Qasr stands as a counter to the US naval facility at Bahrain.

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--the oil states of the Arabian shore, especially Kuwait, reminding them that the US and Britain, to whom they normally turn in time of trouble, are not the only major powers involved in the Gulf.

--Iran, which Moscow is trying to impress but not to alarm--a delicate task.

As Soviet use of Umm Qasr increases, the Shah, the Saudis, and the Arab Gulf rulers will be watching and pressing for evidence of US concern and response.

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SOUTH ASIA

India and Bangladesh have offered to repatriate the 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war held in India in return for Pakistan's release of Bengalis detained there. The offer, however, contains two provisions that Islamabad will find hard to accept:

--several hundred thousand impoverished Biharis (non-Bengali Muslims) who want to leave Bangladesh are to be included in the exchange. The Pakistanis do not want them.

--195 Pakistani POWs would still be tried for war crimes in Bangladesh.

The offer does not require that Pakistan recognize Bangladesh, but does make it clear that Bangladesh will not negotiate directly with Pakistan before recognition. The International Red Cross or the Swiss could, however, act as intermediaries as they have done in the past.

Although this new initiative does not break the impasse, it is an important gesture and highlights New Delhi's growing impatience for a formula to permit the release of the POWs. Prime Minister Gandhi is concerned over mounting foreign and domestic criticism that India is holding them illegally.

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LIBYA

President Qadhafi's speeches this week calling for a "new revolution" appear to be primarily aimed at combating domestic opposition to the proposed union with Egypt. Members of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council have been advising against the merger, and some military officers have been arrested, presumably for plotting to block it. Qadhafi avoided the union issue in his speeches, but they serve as a sharp warning that he intends to get tough.

Although his main concern was the domestic situation, Qadhafi could not pass up the opportunity to warn other Arab governments against seeking regional settlements with Israel. He did state, however, that he has no personal differences with Presidents Sadat and Asad and that he believes in their patriotism. This is probably a bit of fence-mending as well as an effort to underscore his commitment to union with Egypt.

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NOTES

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USSR: So far this year, the Soviets are reported to have contracted to buy nearly 8 million tons of grain worth some $600 million, mostly from the US and Canada. By this time last year, they had purchased 3.5 million tons of the total of 28 million tons ($1.7 billion) that they bought in 1972. All of the new purchases are for delivery by October this year, implying that the Soviets have not yet received adequate imports to tide them over to their next harvest in the fall. Most of the contracts are for feed grain, reflecting the USSR's continuing need to support its livestock program.

UN: Yesterday's Security Council meeting on the Lebanese complaint made no progress. Moreover, behind-the-scenes negotiations indicate there is little chance for agreement on a balanced resolution. Egypt reportedly is urging Lebanon to present a strong resolution condemning Israel on grounds that a US veto is inevitable. The Council will meet again this morning, and the debate will probably continue for several more days.

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